

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS ABUJA 000300

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [NI](#) [IZ](#) [UNSC](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: REACTION TO SECRETARY'S SPEECH

REF: STATE 34072

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED -- PLEASE PROTECT ACCORDINGLY.

[11.](#) (U) Reaction to the Secretary's speech on Iraqi violations has been muted. Local media covered the event with straightforward accounts of the Secretary's presentation. Until today (February 10), Embassy has seen no official comments from the GON and little discussion of the speech's merits in the media. "This Day," an influential daily that late last year ran into trouble with many Muslims over an ill-advised reference to the Prophet Mohammed, courageously editorialized what it hoped Muslims would want to hear. While reporting snippets of the Secretary's speech, the editors countered the Secretary's

SIPDIS

call for a firm stand by the UN: "We believe that on the contrary, it is America that is by her arrogant posture, rendering the United Nations irrelevant." The editors went on to question U.S. motivations and to contend that the U.S. was not "showing the same zeal in resolving the long-drawn Israeli-Palestinian conflict in favor of peace and justice." Sentiment against a U.S. attack, especially one without the cover of a further Security Council Resolution, has been growing slowly but steadily in Nigeria for the past two months.

[12.](#) (SBU) Many of the Embassy's interlocutors have given kudos to the Secretary for the presentation, some commenting that "the same message from any other source would not have been credible." Even so, the overall sentiment appears to be that: a) there is not enough reason to unilaterally attack Iraq, b) the U.S. appears to be using different standards to develop and implement policy toward, respectively, Iraq, the DPRK and Israel, and c) it seems that President Bush has decided to wage war no matter what Iraq does (or does not).

[13.](#) (SBU) On the Nigerian street, tensions continue to rise in anticipation of the expected U.S.-led war on Iraq. Many of Nigeria's approximately 60 million Muslims confront serious economic difficulties and perceive no near-term prospect for improvement. Many also view Nigeria's incumbent President as biased toward mostly-Christian southern Nigeria and fear that he will be re-elected despite their antipathy. Objecting to the likelihood of a "U.S.-led war on our fellow Muslims" offers them a sense of purpose and belonging. Thus far, these objections have taken the form of a street demonstration only once, and then in Ibadan (rather than Abuja or Lagos). There have been reports of efforts to organize additional demonstrations, but a heavy GON security presence appears to date to have discouraged those contemplating action. In the weeks ahead, ongoing efforts to disarm Iraq will combine with electoral passions to increase chances for demonstrations, peaceful and otherwise.

JETER